

IN THE SPECIFICATION:

At page 1, please insert the following new paragraph before the first sentence:

--Cross-Reference to Related Applications:

This application is a continuation of U.S. Patent Application No. 09/723,317 filed on November 27, 2000, which is incorporated herein by reference; which is a continuation of U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 09/399,525 filed on September 20, 1999, and now issued as U.S. Patent No. 6,152,927; which is a continuation of U.S. Patent Application Serial. No. 08/856,902 filed on May 15, 1997, now abandoned. --

Please amend the first full paragraph beginning on line 1 of page 15 as follows:

-- A similar arrangement is found in the plate 31C which includes a four-hole cluster 42. In this case, it can be seen that the four-hole cluster 42 includes two hole pairs 42a and 42b, in a manner similar to the four-hole cluster 41 of FIG. 3(b); however, in this case, the hole pairs are arranged closer to each other, principally because the plate 31C is shorter than the plate [[36b]] 31b. In both of the four-hole clusters 40 and 41, the locking assemblies are provided to lock only a pair of bone screw holes rather than all four holes with a single locking assembly. --

Please amend the first full paragraph beginning on line 1 of page 25 as follows:

-- The locking washer 120, while functioning similar to the washer of the prior embodiment, offers a different construction than the previous washer. Like the washer 90, the locking washer 120 includes an outer circumferential surface 127 that is preferably convex to mate with a spherical head of the bone screw 102. However, in one modification, the washer 120 includes cut-outs 128 in the circumferential surface 127. The cut-outs [[28]] 128 are arranged to coincide with the screw recesses 105 when the locking washer is in a first position, as illustrated in FIG. 21. This structure of the washer 120 allows the washer to remain clear of the recess 105 for unimpeded insertion of the bone screw 102. --